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Twenty honored for academics, leadership at USG

Graduates represented 17 academic programs at Rockville campus

by Nathan Carrick | Staff Writer

Twenty graduating seniors at The Universities at Shady Grove in Rockville earned awards for their academic achievement and leadership and received congratulations from some of the county's top officials at a breakfast last week.

Montgomery County Council President Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist 3) of Gaithersburg, Councilwoman Valerie Ervin (D-Dist. 5) of Silver Spring and University System of Maryland Chancellor William E. Kirwan joined nearly 200 guests to applaud the recipients at the fifth annual Student Achievement and Leadership Breakfast on Friday.

Ervin told the honorees they should be proud of their achievement, which might not have come easily.

"Each honoree is here today not only for his or her academic achievement and leadership skills, but also because you recognized the importance of higher education and made personal sacrifices to achieve your goals," she said.

Seventeen students — one from each academic program at The Universities at Shady Grove — received the Undergraduate Academic Achievement Award, which honors high academic achievement and leadership. Those students were nominated by the program directors.

Three students received the Student Leadership and Service Award, which honors leadership, involvement and dedication to student life. Those recipients were chosen by the staff of The Universities at Shady Grove's Office of Student and Academic Services.

"Students really look forward to this because it's really the only award [The Universities at Shady Grove] gives out," said Joe Bucci, director of marketing for the school.

Ervin told the story of her life to illustrate that earning a college degree can often be fraught with difficulty.

"A lot of these students have had to overcome a lot of adversity to get their college experience over with," she said later. "I had to do the same thing."

Ervin had to put her coursework on hold after she became pregnant, she said. She took a job at a supermarket and was living on food stamps for a time before she was able to

return to school and earn her degree. She was the first person in her family to earn a college degree, she said.

Ervin said she hopes her story can be an inspiration to others facing challenges to getting their college degree.

"Nobody's life takes a straight line; everybody's path is a little jagged," she said. "But my message was basically, if you don't succeed the first time, dust yourself off and get back on the horse."

Ervin eventually earned a master's degree in public administration in 2001 from the University of Baltimore, one of the eight schools that make up The Universities at Shady Grove.

Other partner universities are Bowie State University; Salisbury University; Towson University; University of Maryland, Baltimore; University of Maryland, Baltimore County; University of Maryland, College Park, and University of Maryland University College.

Student Leadership and Service Awards

- Cynthia Zammit of Damascus, University of Maryland, Baltimore, nursing
- Alexander Tran of Rockville, University of Baltimore, simulation and digital entertainment
- Raman Soi of Burtonsville, University of Maryland, College Park, biological sciences

Undergraduate Academic Achievement Awards

- Kim Fordham of Olney, Towson University, elementary and special education
- Madalitso Maleta of Germantown, University of Maryland, Baltimore, health systems management
- Brian James Doyle of Derwood, University of Maryland, Baltimore, simulation and digital entertainment
- Ana Soule of Cabin John, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, nursing
- Fiona Murphy of Silver Spring, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, political science
- Doha Chibani-Talaat of Burtonsville, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, psychology

- Emily Hartman of New Market, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, social work
- Sangeeta Gauchan of Gaithersburg, University of Maryland, College Park, biological sciences
- Matthew Coates of Germantown, University of Maryland, College Park, communication
- Keith Seymour of Baltimore, University of Maryland, College Park, criminology and criminal justice
- Daniel Cleveland of Gaithersburg, University of Maryland, College Park, Robert H. Smith School of Business, accounting
- Richard Michael Brodsky of Baltimore, University of Maryland, College Park, Robert H. Smith School of Business, general business with specialization in entrepreneurship
- Fernando Merino of Bethesda, University of Maryland, College Park, Robert H. Smith School of Business, international business
- Daniel Day of Derwood, University of Maryland, College Park, Robert H. Smith School of Business, marketing
- Benson Maloba of Potomac, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, construction management technology
- Mary Vargas of Gaithersburg, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, hotel and restaurant management
- Roy Gordon of Gaithersburg, University of Maryland, University College, business administration